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ABSTRACT

An evaluation was conducted of 12 higher education service-learning programs at 9 colleges and universities and 1 nonprofit agency in Minnesota. Research was based on interviews with individuals involved in local programs (program directors, faculty, participants, community agency personnel, and service recipients). Analysis of interview responses found themes centered about issues of program design, success and impact of programs, and the long-term sustainability of service-learning. The study found that, while service-learning experiences were appreciated by most respondents, the quality of the programs varied significantly, and long-term sustainability without federal funding appeared to be uncertain in most of the programs. Respondents also urged more community involvement in program design and implementation, stressed the value of critical reflection by students on their experiences, and criticized reporting requirements of the federal grant. A matrix table of Learn and Serve programs in Minnesota is attached, as well as an appendix that defines major categories of study. (CH)

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Learn & Serve Higher Education Programs in Minnesota:

The Impact and Sustainability of Service-Learning

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Learn & Serve Higher Education Programs in Minnesota:

The Impact and Sustainability of Service-Learning

This article provides a descriptive evaluation of 12 higher education, service-learning programs in Minnesota funded in part by the Corporation for National Service: Learn and Serve America Program.[1] The research for this project was conducted in 45 days during the summer of 1995 using a phenomenological methodology to examine the impact and sustainability of the programs. The data for this research were derived from interviews with individuals involved in local initiatives. Three main categories of information became evident after analyzing the data: (1) program design, (2) success and impact of programs, and (3) sustainability and the future of service-learning. These data demonstrate how service-learning experiences are appreciated by most involved, that the quality of programs vary significantly, and that sustainability is uncertain from a long term perspective

Introduction

In 1992, the Minnesota Higher Education Services Office (HESO) received a three-year matching grant from the Corporation for National Service: Learn and Serve America, Higher Education Program (CNS). This money was to be divided into subgrants for higher education institutions throughout the state to develop service-learning initiatives.[2] Over the three year period, 12 CNS programs have operated in 9 colleges and universities throughout the state and one non-profit agency, beginning a wave of enthusiasm regarding this growing pedagogic method.

The purpose of this research was to provide a descriptive evaluation of the impact and sustainability of service-learning programs in Minnesota funded by the three year grant from CNS. The specific questions under consideration here are: (1) what was the impact of these 12 service-learning programs in Minnesota, and (2) how will these programs be sustained after this source of funding is discontinued? This project is not an evaluation in the strictest sense due to the use of a phenomenological methodology. This type of research seeks to describe the impressions of those involved in these service-learning programs mainly from a subjective perspective. This project is an evaluation because it provides a summary of the activities as described by the individuals involved.

Literature Review[3]

Over the past century, experiential education has traveled through several cycles, where it has encountered popularity and then disdain. Since the signing of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 by President George Bush, service-learning and other types of experiential education

have met with renewed enthusiasm. A number of leading scholars in this field have produced seminal pieces of literature in reference service-learning efforts in Minnesota. Conrad and Hedin conducted a cornerstone research project (1982) and authored commentaries on service-learning (1987, 1991) that are often referred to in contemporary literature on the subject. According to Conrad and Hedin (1991), the recent enthusiasm for this field is due to a lack of civic participation among youth, and the need to take the abstraction out of education by placing the lessons within the reality of life.

Much of the quantitative research conducted in recent years suggests that the efficacy of service-learning needs to be further substantiated through empirical investigation. Nevertheless, Conrad and Hedin note that "evidence from qualitative, anecdotal studies suggest even more strongly and consistently that community service can be a worthwhile, useful, enjoyable, and powerful learning experience" (1991, p. 746). It may be conceded that there is a need for statistical studies that verify the effectiveness of service-learning. Nevertheless, this is not the time to abandon qualitative studies that examine the nature of the service-learning experience.

Gross (1991) used a participant-observation methodology to demonstrate that community service learning frequently made students feel good about themselves, introduced them to a world unique to their experiences, placed them in a situation where they were responsible for others, helped them learn about the different ways people lived and viewed the world, and provided them with an opportunity to succeed which otherwise may not have been afforded to them. Smith (1994) found that students and faculty may be more motivated to become involved in service-learning projects for more personal reasons such as those listed above, while national policy makers and national organizations were motivated by service-learning's merits of developing civic responsibility, civic participation, and citizenship.

A team of researchers from the University of Minnesota pooled qualitative evaluation projects of service-learning programs throughout the state. These evaluations had methodological commonalties that were important to consider for this project. One such commonality was that evaluators can act as translators, helping the people within a program to communicate to those from

outside groups such as funding agencies or community groups (Neal, Shumer, Gorak, Andberg,, et.al., 1994).

A variety of empirical studies have demonstrated that service-learning has an impact on the social/psychological character of students, influences academic learning, and affects the role of faculty. Research on community service learning has indicated that students are likely to develop mature interpersonal communication skills and moral reasoning proficiency (McGill, 1992; Boss, 1994). Further evidence suggested that service-learning promotes cognitive development and has significant effects on students' personal values (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; Batchelder and Root, 1994). Giles & Eyler (1994) supported these findings in a study that demonstrated how students were less likely to blame recipients of service for their misfortune.

As a pedagogical tool, service-learning has proven to be highly effective for increasing student motivation and contextual understanding of course material (Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Miller, 1994). On the other hand, service-learning without critical reflection has no more benefit than conventional teaching methods (Conrad and Hedin, 1982). In considering the development of an institutional appreciation of service-learning, it is important to recognize that faculty are in control of the curriculum at an institution and therefore are the ones to determine whether service-learning is accepted as a reasonable pedagogic tool (AAUP, 1966; Bowen & Schuster, 1986).

These works of research provided a backdrop for issues which I thought might be discovered during the process of collecting the data. Furthermore, the qualitative literature described similar methodologies to the one used for this study, and provided a reference point as I sought to determine if my design was true to prevailing qualitative methods.

Methodology

The philosophical frame of hermeneutic phenomenology was most appropriate for addressing the specific research questions and tapping into the experience of individuals involved in service-learning. This allowed the individuals involved to express themselves in an environment without constraints or presumptions. Therefore, any assumptions that were made about the status of impact and sustainability were <u>not</u> expressed during the collection of information unless initiated by

the interviewee. Understandings and meanings within the texts (transcriptions of the interviews) were established as the data were interpreted through a combination of hermeneutics and phenomenology:

> Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is a descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there is no such thing as uninterpreted phenomena. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 180)

This methodology is appropriate for this project because the questions often required a request for subjective information from the interviewees. It allows for developing an understanding of the interviewees from a holistic perspective by interpreting the words and gestures they use to express themselves. The interpretive process enabled me to enter into the person's experience, and to work together with her or him to understand the essence of the questions before us. Assumptions were subjugated to those of the interviewees as they sought to present an understandable representation of their beliefs, hopes, aspirations, and desires pertaining to service-learning.

Methods

The system of inquiry described above allowed for the interviewer to be led by the questions, rather than forcing the process through a large number of prearranged questions (Hultgren, 1989). The source for data used in this project consisted primarily of text from interviews complemented by previously-existing quantitative and qualitative reports.

It should be noted that the design of this project was constructed within extreme time limitations and thereby required selective examination of CNS programs in Minnesota. Since an exhaustive review could not be conducted, a matrix of the institutions was developed to help select which programs to investigate intensively. Factors used to develop this matrix were the character of the institution that housed the service-learning programs and the type of project that was operated. The institutions operated programs that typically focused on either teacher/faculty training or community service.[4] The non-profit agency operated a "capacity building" project facilitating the

development of the higher education, service-learning programs in Minnesota. A summary of the programs is offered in Table 1. (PLACE TABLE 1 HERE)

The following institutions and respective service-learning programs were selected for the intensive site visits: a private, liberal arts college with a program focusing on teacher/faculty education; a non-profit agency designed to create institutional partnerships with community agencies and to improve service-learning programs in accordance with state-of-the-art techniques and philosophies; a public, comprehensive university with a program concentrating on service to the community; and a public, research university with a program linking student participants to community services. These institutions were selected based on their placement within the matrix, and through consultation with the project supervisor for this research effort. It was determined that these institutions offered a comprehensive review of projects throughout the state with a reasonable number of site visits.

Within each of these institutions, those interviewed included program directors, faculty, participants (college students, etc.), community agency personnel, and recipients of service. The program director was asked to select median candidates (i.e., those who represent mid-level quality) from among the participants, faculty, community representatives, and recipients of service involved in the respective program. Institutions not included in the site visits were also incorporated into the study with data collected during phone interviews with the program directors or their assistants, and through review of previously existing reports. The following quotes from interviewees are offered verbatim in agreement with the methodology's intent of creating data that has soul and character.

HESO stipulated that the study was to focus on the impact and sustainability of programs. It also itemized a list of examination points that were to be investigated. Therefore, the research was arranged to explain the examination points as they fit under the two major categories of impact and sustainability. A third grouping, exemplary practice, was added due to the fact that one examination point did not correspond to either of the key points listed above (See Appendix I). The questions used in the interviews corresponded directly to these points. Following the interview process, tapes of the conversations were transcribed into verbatim texts. Validation of the data within the

methodological framework of this project is achieved through intersubjective agreement. This requires the researcher to develop an understanding of an interviewee's story not only from interpreting the text, but also by allowing the interviewee to review the transcript. Each interviewee was presented the opportunity to verify the text from their interview with me, and suggest alterations that offered better representations of their ideas.

The process of thematic analysis was initiated after the interview transcriptions were completed to expose the phenomenological meanings expressed by the authors. Hermeneutic phenomenological reflection seeks to recover the meanings of the authors and to attach an interpretation from which an understanding is presented. The thematic analysis followed the Van Manen "highlighting approach," which looks for statements that reveal the essence of what was na ated (Van Manen, 1990, p. 93). Guiding this analysis were the three key areas of impact, sustainability, and exemplary practice. Practically speaking, each text was coded by highlighting sections of the data that had similar qualities, and identifying these selections with titles, otherwise known as themes. The themes were then collected into similar groups and encompassed by another set of titles called phrases. These phrases corresponded to the three key areas of impact, sustainability, and exemplary practice. The findings from this analysis created a picture of what the experience has been like for the interviewees involved in the CNS-funded programs in Minnesota over the past three years.

Findings

It is not surprising that the results did not conform exactly to the three key areas of the study: impact, sustainability, and exemplary practice. After coding the data and reviewing the contents, it became clear that the themes fit most appropriately into the following common phrases. This section of the article provides a summary of the phrases, followed by detailed exploration of each title. It is worth mentioning that there was a degree of crossover between these phrases. Nevertheless, the sum of the data easily fell under the following three phrases.

Program Design: this phrase was not described in the earlier stages of the study. Interviewees took advantage of the questions on the success of program design and exemplary practice to detail

their beliefs, understandings, and critiques of the ways that service-learning programs should be constructed and implemented. This section offers us a view of the theoretical frames held by those consulted.

Success and Impact of Programs: since this aspect was the focus of the study, interviewees offered a large amount of information on questions relating to the successes, products, and outcomes of programs. These data detailed an array of anecdotes on impact as they related to participants, community members (including recipients of service), faculty, program administrators, K-12 youth, and the legacy that such efforts may create. The stories that are essential to understanding the affects of service-learning are provided in this section.

Sustainability and the Future of Service-Learning: the issue of sustainability is quite dynamic as CNS anticipates deep cuts from Congress. Questions related to sustainability were addressed primarily by program directors, although some faculty were able to provide information on this subject as they turned their thoughts toward the future of service-learning. The impact of service-learning projects on institutions (addressed in the section above) serves as a cornerstone for examining sustainability. This impact significantly interrelates with issues such as institutionalization, sustainability, administrative advocacy of service-learning initiatives, funding, and the future of service-learning for Minnesota's colleges and universities.

Program Design

It is novel that the phrase "program design" emerged after examining the content of the nearly 30 overall themes identified in the process of coding the data. Nevertheless, the focus of this study remained on the impact and sustainability of programs, as stated earlier. This first phrase is not addressed as an item of first priority, but as a representation of theory and ideals that appear to naturally precede ones related to practice.

Interviewees took the opportunity to provide characteristics of what they thought were components of model programs. One issue that received a good deal of unsolicited attention was improving partnerships between higher educational institutions and community agencies or local school districts. It was explained that authentic collaborative relationships exist when colleges and

universities work with the community agencies, schools, etc., at all stages of a service-learning program, and when both groups creatively look for ways to give to each other. One community representative said that he appreciated the work that had been conducted by the local university, but wished that representatives from this institution had consulted him in the developmental stages of the program:

> Whoever put the program together, and thought of it, had a nice dream — to go out to the community and expose the university students to get this firsthand experience, so to speak. I don't think we were a part of it in the original [program] design. So that would be a criticism I would have. I don't know what the original design was.

Another component demonstrating authentic service-learning involved the presence of reflection sessions and/or journaling. The experience of reflection allows college student participants the opportunity to deliberate about their service experience individually, or within a group. Several program directors and faculty members said that reflection is what separates service-learning from volunteerism. Very few programs failed to require some type of reflection activity. Variations were present in the amount of reflection that different programs required of its participants. One program had a reflection session only once per academic term, while others provided opportunities at each meeting of a class.

There were a number of other model program components identified by the interviewees, including the need to provide relevant reading material on issues of societal impact and social justice movements. It is likely that students will need to develop a significant degree of flexibility and intimacy as they face the problems that occur in the lives of those in the community: "Sometimes maybe it's just starting out by talking to the youth: 'How was your weekend? Oh, [your] dad beat up [your] mom. Well, maybe [this] day is not the day that we're going to get a lot of math done.'"

There was a common recommendation to encourage and recruit more participants from diverse backgrounds to be involved in service-leaning programs. Nonetheless, what appears as mainstream in one community may offer diversity in another. For example, one community representative said that he appreciated the large number of service-learning participants who were

Caucasian. This was beneficial at his social service site because it provided a cross-cultural experience for many of the youth in his facility, who were primarily African American. He added that it is important to encourage participation of college/university students from diverse backgrounds in service-learning programs. Other meaningful characteristics of service-learning according to the interviewees included linking community service to academic grades, encouraging faculty on campus to improve the service-learning components of their classes, obtaining sufficient staff support, and implementing consistent evaluation mechanisms. According to the interviewees, these program characteristics can be used to determine the overall quality of a service-learning initiative on a campus.

Success and Impact of Programs

Each individual in the study was first asked if they thought their service-learning program was successful, and why. As anticipated, everybody said their program was successful. The "why?" presents the detail and interest to this research. The interviewees provided a plethora of information on the impact realized by the service-learning programs. The largest number of themes related to participants (including K-12 teachers), followed by those corresponding to community members (including recipients of service), post-secondary faculty members, program administrators, K-12 students, and related institutions/organizations. This section will detail the impact that service-learning has had on each of these groups, and address the legacies that these programs may leave as proposed by the interviewees. This discussion also addresses the critical reflections interviewees offered of their programs and institutions.

A service-learning experience brings to life aspects of the community that college and university students may otherwise only be exposed to in books. One male participant serving as a tutor for youth at a homeless shelter related the following story:

> The shelter I go to, only women and children are allowed. Men aren't. I didn't really think about it. I was wondering why the door was locked. I rang the buzzer and the security guard came around and started questioning me. He was hesitant to let me in [but eventually he did.] And on my way home, I thought about that. He didn't give me very good treatment, but it

> made me realize that this is a home for battered women and their children. So it made me think about if this guy had to go to this degree of difficulty just to let me in, just think how bad these women have been treated throughout their lives. And that's one thing that made me learn how much more these kids have gone through than I did in my childhood.

Overall, the participants said that they often continued to visit the community centers they were associated with after their service-learning experience. One program director tabulated that 66% of the participants at his college continued volunteering after their service-learning experience.

A shining example among the student participants was a young woman who was selected by USA Today as one of the top 100 students in the United States as a result of her service-learning experience. She wrote a curriculum for a fine-arts magnet school, titled "Aging and Experience with Adults," detailing a partnership between a high school class and a long-term care center. In the application of this curriculum, high school students engaged in character sketches, personal profiles, dramas, poetry, and other presentations with older adults. Activities also included playing The Price is Right using 1920 prices, and documenting discussions with the adults talking about their first car. The culmination of the project was the creation and performance of a drama based on the experience. Each of the high school students was involved as a performer, writer, set designer/manufacturer, or stage technician. The service-learning program director commented that the young woman was quite surprised by all the attention. She developed a service-learning experience that was similar to those she had throughout her youth: "She had grown up in 4-H. Service was a part of her life." Furthermore, both participants and faculty alike stated that the skills students acquired through service-learning experiences, like those mentioned above, can help to develop expertise in areas that will be beneficial in later occupational pursuits.

The influence that these programs have on the community is noteworthy for at least two reasons. First, participants are serving as role models for youth in challenged neighborhoods. A community representative explained that many of the children involved in his program do not know of any person in a professional position: "So, these are highly motivated, successful people — academically successful people. We're matching them up with inner city kids who don't think they

have a chance to go to college, or don't understand the type of commitment [it takes to be academically successful]." On a more fundamental level, the children simply appreciate the care and attention. As one shy, inner city youth said about her tutor: "She just helped me with my work: math, reading, and stuff. She was nice." Second, community agency representatives said that the service-learning programs provide the most reliable volunteer assistance. They attributed this dependability to the link between service and learning. They added that the assistance provided by nearby colleges and universities is essential to keeping their projects in operation: "A lot of the kids here are from broken homes — drug abuse, family abuse, and all kinds of abuse in the neighborhood. And to be able to have a place where they can be safe and nurtured is important. That is why the tutors need to be here every day."

In Minnesota, service-learning programs have also been used to tackle social challenges such as the effects of gambling on rural communities, to supply role models for youth through Big Buddies programs, to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) tutors, and many other services which community representatives state are meeting real needs.

As more faculty become engaged in service-learning, more stories relating to the impact of these experiences begin to surface. One program director noted that involvement of faculty is improving dramatically within the state:

> One of the things that has been wildly successful over the past three years is [that] there [were] hardly any faculty. In 1990-91, when a meeting of faculty from around the state [involved in service-learning was called], 15 people showed up. This was right as this thing was getting off the ground. In September of 1994, 150 people showed up. Not just faculty but academic deans. So in terms of outcomes, the level of awareness, and [the] level of engagement of faculty in service learning has just skyrocketed.

This view must be tempered by the claims of other program administrators, who said involving faculty had not been entirely successful. While the number of enthusiastic faculty involved has increased dramatically on a state level, institutions are still struggling to mobilize a contingent of faculty who believe in the benefits of service-learning.

At the advent of the CNS funded effort in Minnesota three years ago, program directors were resistant to redirecting the student-run volunteer operations toward academically oriented service-learning programs. One interviewee said, "Three years ago [program administrators] were coming in kicking and screaming. They [only] submitted proposals because the money was there." One program director commented that it had been an educational experience learning that community service can take a variety of different shapes. The personal benefits that program directors experience from the service-learning initiatives is equally significant as it is to others involved: "It connects me to students. It allows me to really keep sort of a pulse on what the issues are for students engaging in community service, which benefits not only the students taking this service-learning course, but all of our extracurricular programs and faculty who are interested in integrating service." Program directors were especially proud of the recognition that their programs have received. One program was designated by the national Campus Compact office as a model program, and won a Minnesota Governor's Youth Service Award.

K-12 schools present an interesting dynamic as we examine service-learning in higher education. Programs at colleges and universities around the state not only share tutors and mentors to children, they also serve to educate teachers (in training or in the field) about service-learning principles and practices. In turn, these teachers "pass the torch" to these youth for continuing the tradition of service-learning. As a part of a graduate level service-learning class, one special education teacher developed a service program linking a class of physically/mentally challenged youth, a third grade class, and senior high school students in a publicity campaign associated with the Neighborhood Improvement Project in St. Paul. As a result of their efforts, the city mayor presented the group with an official proclamation stating that July 1, 1995 was dedicated to them for their outstanding contribution to the community. A project with first graders, student teachers, and a grade school teacher/adjunct faculty member addressed environmental concerns which drew attention and a letter of appreciation from President Bill Clinton. In both of these cases, the children were proud of their accomplishments. The teacher in charge of this project commented that this effort also taught the youth that all people can be involved in constructive community service.

Two very important developments have occurred at the institution/organization level of higher educational service-learning in Minnesota. Interviewees said that CNS funding provided a capacity building program to improve the efforts of service-learning within the state, which helped to expedite the development of the Minnesota Campus Compact (the Compact). The Compact represents 45 college and university presidents throughout the state who publicly support service-learning on their campuses, and throughout the state. The Compact provides professional development, networking opportunities, on-site assessments, and advocacy at the state and federal levels for service-learning initiatives within higher education in Minnesota. As part of this advocacy role, the Compact worked with the state legislature to draft an omnibus higher education bill titled, "State Grants Available for Campus-Community Collaboration." In May, 1995, Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson signed this bill into law, providing $230,000 over the next biennium for local campus-community projects addressing long-term solutions to community challenges.

HESO also asked that this research consider what legacy these programs will be. After only three years of activity, it is difficult to assess the impact that the programs will have in the future. Interviewees could only speculate what the legacy might be. One elementary teacher summarized the potential of these programs specifically, and for service-learning in general: "The legacy that's left with me is crystal clear. We really can make change in programs, and that [change] happens slowly. We really can make a difference."

As model proponents of reflection, the interviewees provided a critical review of the status of their own programs, and of service-learning within Minnesota's higher education institutions as a whole. Some of these critical points have already been mentioned, including the need for more community involvement in program design and implementation. The reporting requirements for the CNS grant were on the top of the list for critical comments. One institution dropped its CNS funding after the second year because the reporting burden was so excessive.[5] Other critiques urged that community agencies use the service of participants appropriately, and that institutions should train college students to advocate for themselves if an agency does not provide an experience that agrees

with the pedagogic intent of service-learning. Programs also need to improve their ability to network with each other. Several of the service-learning efforts located in rural areas did not have access to the professional development opportunities that were usually offered in the urban area. These critiques are offered as a reflection that the programs are not perfect. They are having a substantive impact on the lives of all involved. However, there remains room for progress and improvement.

Sustainability and the Future of Service-Learning

The impact that these programs have had on their host colleges and universities have left an indelible mark on their reputation with the community and their future as neighbors to those seeking quality assistance and partnership. Through service-learning, higher education institutions are receiving assistance from the community by providing an environment for students to apply their knowledge. In return, community agencies gain much-needed assistance from college students. It is essential for these links to be strengthened as legislators on the state and federal levels continually consider ways to grapple with fewer resources while the need for human services multiply. CNS is especially interested in how programs have developed means to sustain themselves given the impending cuts expected in their own budgets. Data from the interviews provided information about the level of advocacy offered by institutions' central administrations. They also detail the steps taken toward or away from institutionalization of programs, describe issues relating to funding (including alternative sources to CNS support), and provide future plans for these service-learning programs.

Presidents at most of the institutions included in this study have expressed support for service-learning at their institutions. Some have been intimately involved in the promotion of experiential education and service-learning in Minnesota's colleges and universities, including Dr. Axel Steurer from Gustavus Adolphus College, who was key to establishing the Minnesota Campus Compact, and Dr. Charles Anderson from Augsburg College, chair of the Minnesota Commission for National and Community Service.

It is not surprising to hear that there is a great deal of variety in the level of institutionalization of these programs. In Minnesota, there are both shining examples and situations that make one

despair. At least four of the ten existing programs are fully institutionalized; representatives from these programs said that their offices and/or staff are funded directly through the institutional operating budget, and will be able to sustain the loss of CNS funding. Other institutions will have to struggle to keep their ship afloat, or possibly even abandon their programs once the funding ends. One possible solution for those in challenging situations may be through an entrepreneurial stance for maintaining service-learning programs:

> The college isn't going to suddenly discover them and say, "Here's a bunch of cash for your permanent budget forever and ever." You need to be strategic about who you're working with, about how you package what you're doing. And, you need to be very clear about the results, impacts, [and] outcomes on your evaluations. I mean, it's an issue of survival.

This defense appears to be essential. Even one of the most institutionalized programs existing in this study requires itself to continue to defend its priority position as other programs seek to increase their status and level of funding.

Along with the use of institutional and CNS funds, resourceful service-learning advocates seek a variety of internal and external sources. Several programs mentioned their reliance on grants from the Otto Bremmer Foundation. Other programs have tapped into student activities fees, and block grants from the student senate for promoting student organizations' involvement in co-curricular service-learning. Other sources included the United Way, the Science Museum of Minnesota, the USDA, and federal Work Study funds. Some of these institutions have external funding for service-learning programs through a state equivalent of the Corparation for National Service called Minnesota Youth Works. The programs under discussion are evidently diversifying their sources of income to improve their chances of sustainability.

This section demonstrated that program directors work intelligently within the system to find the funding they need to keep their programs in operation. Most of the programs involved in this study have access to adequate funding through the end of the 1995-96 school year. After that, they do not have sufficient funds to continue operating as they have been, and some may face serious

reductions or elimination. In response, interviewees said that the Compact is developing initiatives to help sustain these programs as the impending storm draws near.

In spite of the difficult financial forecast, many faculty and programs directors are excited about the future of service-learning in Minnesota. There is no lack of creative ideas for implementing and advancing service-learning initiatives, including establishing a service-learning minor and joint meetings with advocates and higher education presidents, both of which are possible in the near future. These examples provided a glimpse into the hope of those involved in service-learning. This pedagogic method breeds life into faculty, students, and the community alike. Faculty see teaching that is effectively demonstrating theoretical principles in action. Students are experiencing the joy of learning and the satisfaction that they can make a difference. Community members are pleased to see the growing partnerships with higher educational institutions, and are sharing in the mutual benefit of the experience. For these reasons, there is a passion in the voices of service-learning advocates as the future possibilities present themselves. There are challenges, successes, and failures ahead for all. However, many institutions have committed themselves to this new teaching form that brings education to life.

Summary

It can be deduced that most of the ideas expressed by the interviewees conform to recent service-learning research. Students and recipients of service noted that their lives were changed as a result of the experience. Community directors appreciated the opportunity to collaborate, but were concerned about more significant involvement in program design. Faculty were impressed with how service-learning made course material relevant. Finally, program directors appreciated the opportunity to use a pedagogic tool that creates closer links between the college and the community.

The programs demonstrated strengths and weaknesses. Reporting requirements from CNS were squelching the enthusiasm of many institutions. Several individuals from less advantaged programs noted that they were unable to attend professional development activities related to service-learning; they said their absence is often perceived as a lack of interest or indifference. If these perceptions are accurate, those who are in the greatest need of assistance may be least able to receive

it. There are a number of factors contributing to this problem, including the percentage of time an institution dedicates to a service-learning director position, the proximity of the one institution to another, and the degree to which professional meetings are held in a variety of locations. These less-developed programs may have an unjustified reputation simply because of their location and lack of institutional commitment.

With respect to sustainability, it appears that most programs are in a good or very good position to remain in operation for the next year or two; a minority may not be so fortunate. All need to do serious long-term financial planning.

The interviewees listed a number of exemplary practices including critical reflection. There are one or two programs operating under the name of service-learning that may be little more than volunteer programs; they require almost no critical reflection from the college student participants' during their service-learning experience. Internal evaluation has been stressed by coordinating mechanisms within the state to help develop and improve the use of critical reflection. As noted earlier, however, the programs that are in the greatest need are usually the ones least able to make the lengthy trips required to attend the professional development seminars where these practices are discussed.

Other service-learning ideals include developing collaborative relationships between institutions and community agencies and providing other aspects of academic rigor (i.e., reading material, service-learning experience tied to academic credit, faculty "buy-in," and several more). When comparing the interviewees' comments about their programs to the ideal service-learning models they expressed, it became apparent that many programs have room to improve. The deficiencies that exist may not be the result of negligence, but of transition. One program administrator recognized that it will take time for change to occur, and for ideals to be realized.

This study only scratched the surface of the investigations that could be conducted on these programs. A more intensive research project could offer a great deal more depth to the analysis and character portrayals. One of the most significant deficits of this study was the lack of involvement from recipients of service, most of whom were school-age children on summer break and therefore

unavailable. Future study of these programs could be conducted over a longer period of time, involve intensive review of all programs, include all of the groups involved, examine programs according to all ten of the exemplary principles provided by Honnet & Poulsen (1989), and most importantly, allow more time to reflect and deliberate over the texts — studying the essence of each individuals' contributions to the research.

This descriptive evaluation portrays a collection of views on service-learning activities unique to the individuals they represent. We are provided with an intimate and personal look into the cares and concerns of the people included in this study. The program directors and faculty members are impassioned about the pedagogic strength of service-learning. The participants are touched by the experiences outside their ordinary world and the new knowledge that comes through the connection of theory and practice. They learn that they can really make a difference in the world, one person at a time. The community representatives are the dedicated soldiers in trenches that many fear to tread. These people love their work and the people they seek to assist. We have seen joy because of success, remorse when achievement seemed unattainable, frustration due to negligence, and wisdom in the face of obstacles. This is the nature of phenomenological research and service-learning — touching the experience and the lives of those involved.

Table 1[6]

Matrix of CNS Learn & Serve America Higher Education Programs in Minnesota

	Teacher Training	Community Service	Capacity Building	
Non-profit Agency	--	--	1	
Liberal Arts Colleges	1	2	--	
Research University	--	1	--	
State Universities	1	4	--	
Technical College	--	2	--	
Total	2	9	1	= 12 programs

Appendix I

Impact

* Document the factors that make the projects successful for subgrantees
* Document which of the project activities were actually implemented as compared to the original project design
* Document the products and outcomes of subgrantee programs
* Document the community service/service learning legacies that subgrantees have started

Sustainability

* Document the conscious steps taken by subgrantees and their institutions to institutionalize grant programs activities
* Document factors causing institutionalization not to occur

Exemplary Practice.

* Document the degree to which the content and strategies of subgrantee projects reflect relevant research and exemplary practice in community service/service-learning

Notes

[1] This research was based upon work supervised by the Minnesota Higher Education Services Office (HESO) and supported through a grant from the Corporation for National Service: Learn and Serve America Program, B.2 (CNS). Opinions or points of view expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of HESO or CNS. A comprehensive copy of this research is available through HESO under the title of Service-learning in higher education: Minnesota's story of Learn & Servce Higher Education programs.

[2] HESO provided matching funds for its portion of the grant as chief administrator. Each institution that received a subgrant provided matching funds for their portion of the grant. This provided the total allotment for the match to the entire grant.

[3] The literature reviewed for this project included items recommended by well known scholars in the field including Gary Hesser (Augsburg College), Dwight Giles (Vanderbilt University), and Robert Shumer (University of Minnesota). Further literature was provided by the National Service-Learning Cooperative: The K-12 Serve-America Clearinghouse located at the University of Minnesota.

[4] Several institutions had more than one program, accounting for the difference between the number of programs and institutions. In all, there were 12 programs active during the three year grant cycle at 10 institutions/organization.

[5] This fact was provided by Professor Larry Bailis, Brandeis University, Massachusetts, who conducted on-site interviews of this service-learning program in the Spring of 1994.

[6] There were only 10 programs in operation as of August 1995. One of the 12 original programs did not enter into the third year of the grant cycle. Two other programs merged into one since they were operating at the same institution.